
Fossil Free RSC – Divest from BP in the Arts

This Union Notes:

1. The Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) has had a sponsorship deal with BP since 2011, beginning with BP's sponsorship of the World Shakespeare Festival, followed by their sponsorship of the RSC's 16-25 tickets scheme. (1)
2. It is not known the exact figure of BP's sponsorship with the RSC, but it is estimated to be around 0.5% of the RSC's income. (2)
3. The BP sponsorship funds the RSC's £5 tickets for 16-25 year olds (the RSC Key). (3)
4. The RSC has run a £5 tickets scheme for 16-25 year olds since 2004.
5. Fossil Free £5 Tickets (part of the Fossil Free RSC campaign) launched in 2017, and offers £5 tickets for RSC shows to 16-25 year olds without the attachment of BP sponsorship. (4)
6. Fossil Free £5 Tickets crowdfunded approx. £3200 in its first month, which funded tickets for 16-25 year olds, including Warwick students, to access RSC shows. The crowdfunder also donates 10% of donations to two campaigns: Bridge the Gulf, and Save West Papua. (5)
7. The Fossil Free RSC campaign calls for an end to BP's sponsorship of the RSC.
8. BP or not BP? calls for an end to BP's sponsorship of the Arts, and in April 2017 (as well as several times in 2012) invaded the Royal Shakespeare Theatre stage in protest at BP's sponsorship of the RSC. (6)
9. BP currently holds sponsorship deals with the British Museum (since 1996), the National Portrait Gallery (since 1989), the Royal Opera House (since 1989) and the RSC (since 2012). (7)
10. BP's sponsorship deal with Tate came to an end after 17 years in 2016. Prior to the ending of this deal, there had been ongoing calls for divestment. (8)
11. Actor Mark Rylance has stated that he would not perform for the RSC while their sponsorship deal with BP remains. (9)

This Union Believes:

1. The RSC, as a major theatre local to many Warwick students, is a much-loved organisation to our members.
2. Many of the young people who have used the Fossil Free £5 Tickets scheme are Warwick students, according to anecdotal evidence from the organisers.
3. The RSC could fund its 16-25 tickets scheme without BP sponsorship, especially given the extraordinary success of *Matilda the Musical*. In 2016-17, the RSC delivered a surplus of £4 million. (10)
4. Young people ought to have access to affordable cultural activities, for their personal development and growth, for enjoyment, and for the access to ideas and theories such activities permit.
5. BP's sponsorship of the Arts is disingenuous and detracts from the devastating effects on people's lives, and on the environment at large, of BP's business activities.
6. The RSC should divest from BP by ending its sponsorship deal.
7. The RSC should fund its 16-25 tickets scheme using alternative funds, such as those from its current surplus produced by *Matilda the Musical* (£4.1 million of the income produced by *Matilda* was transferred to the RSC's reserves for future investment in 2015-16 [11]).

This Union Resolves:

1. For the Environment and Ethics Officer(s), and the Sabbatical Officer(s) with the Environment Portfolio to support the Fossil Free RSC campaign to lobby the RSC to divest from BP and seek alternative sponsorship, funding or investment from ethical sources.
2. For the Environment and Ethics Officer(s), and the Sabbatical Officer(s) with the Environment Portfolio to write to the Artistic Director of the RSC and the RSC's Board of Trustees lobbying for divestment from BP.

REFERENCES

This Union Notes

1. https://www.bp.com/en_gb/united-kingdom/bp-in-the-community/connecting-through-arts-and-culture/bp-and-the-royal-shakespeare-company.html
2. <https://cultureunstained.org/2017/08/31/revealed-the-rscs-new-sponsorship-rules/>
3. <https://www.rsc.org.uk/students-and-young-people/bp-5-tickets>
4. <https://cultureunstained.org/fossilfreetix/>
5. <https://www.gofundme.com/fossilfreetix>
6. <https://bp-or-not-bp.org/2017/04/27/shakespeare-himself-just-invaded-the-rsc-stage-in-outrage-at-bp-sponsorship/>
7. https://www.bp.com/en_gb/united-kingdom/bp-in-the-community/connecting-through-arts-and-culture.html
8. <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/mar/11/bp-to-end-tate-sponsorship-climate-protests>
9. <https://www.thestage.co.uk/news/2016/mark-rylance-i-wont-work-for-the-rsc-while-it-deals-with-bp/>

This Union Believes

10. <https://www.rsc.org.uk/about-us/facts-and-figures/annual-review>
11. <https://cdn2.rsc.org.uk/sitefinity/corporate/rsc-annualreview-2015-2016.pdf>

Policy History		
Action	Body	Date